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Journal

Out-of-Body Experiences

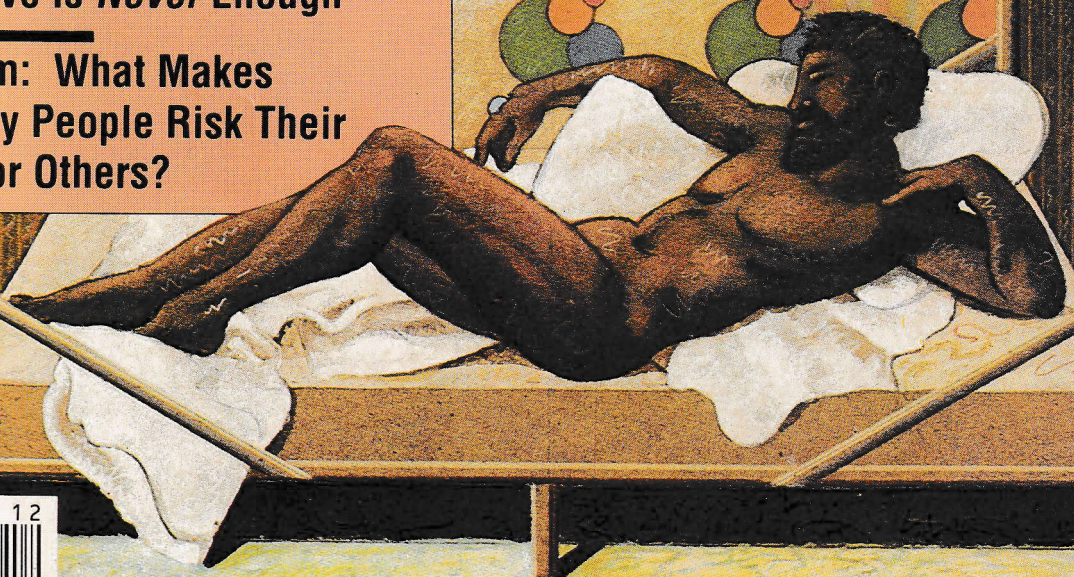
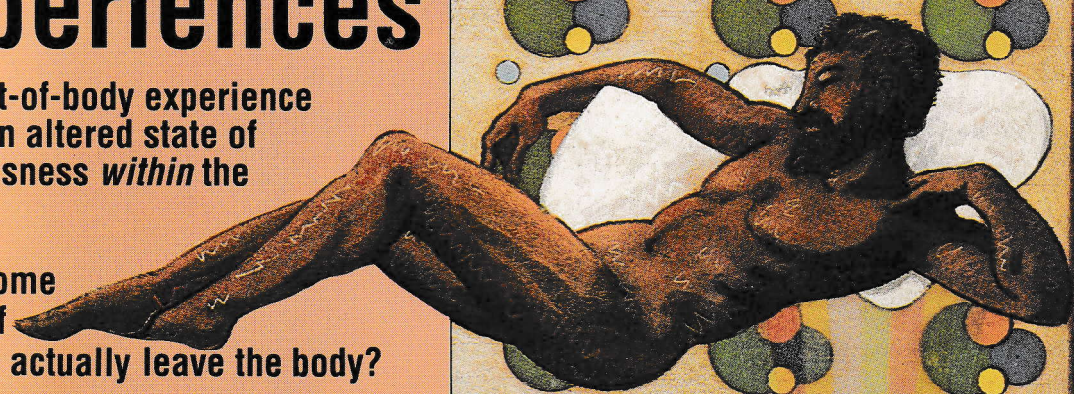
Is the out-of-body experience simply an altered state of consciousness *within* the mind?

Or can some aspect of a person actually leave the body?

A first-hand report from the Monroe Institute where scores of men and women are going to try to find the answers.

Why Love Is *Never* Enough

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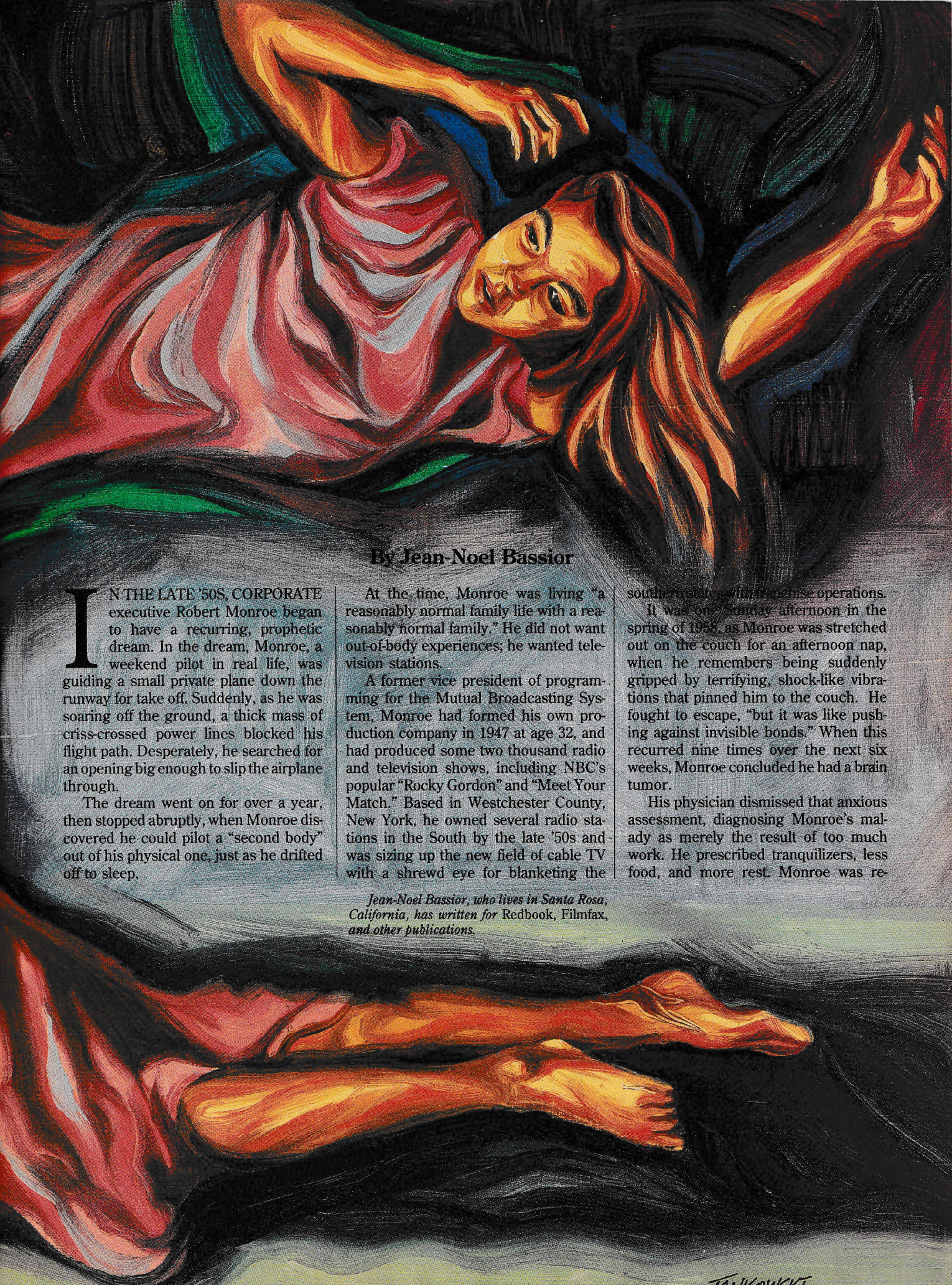
Wendy G. Smith

Do we go to sleep at night, or do we go Somewhere Else, leading a double life we rationalize when we wake up as "just a dream"? Is physical reality the only one to be believed—or are we really multidimensional beings existing simultaneously in many realities?

A first-hand report from the Monroe Institute, where scores of ordinary men and women are going to try to find the answers.

ASTRAL TRAVEL

The background of the page is a painting. It depicts two figures, possibly women, lying down in a dark, shadowy environment. They are wearing long, flowing robes of a vibrant red color. The figure in the foreground is lying on her side, with her head resting on her hand, appearing to be asleep or in a state of unconsciousness. The figure in the background is also lying down, with her legs extended. The painting style is expressive, with visible brushstrokes and a rich, somewhat somber color palette dominated by the red of the robes and the dark tones of the background.



By Jean-Noel Bassior

IN THE LATE '50S, CORPORATE executive Robert Monroe began to have a recurring, prophetic dream. In the dream, Monroe, a weekend pilot in real life, was guiding a small private plane down the runway for take off. Suddenly, as he was soaring off the ground, a thick mass of criss-crossed power lines blocked his flight path. Desperately, he searched for an opening big enough to slip the airplane through.

The dream went on for over a year, then stopped abruptly, when Monroe discovered he could pilot a "second body" out of his physical one, just as he drifted off to sleep.

At the time, Monroe was living "a reasonably normal family life with a reasonably normal family." He did not want out-of-body experiences; he wanted television stations.

A former vice president of programming for the Mutual Broadcasting System, Monroe had formed his own production company in 1947 at age 32, and had produced some two thousand radio and television shows, including NBC's popular "Rocky Gordon" and "Meet Your Match." Based in Westchester County, New York, he owned several radio stations in the South by the late '50s and was sizing up the new field of cable TV with a shrewd eye for blanketing the

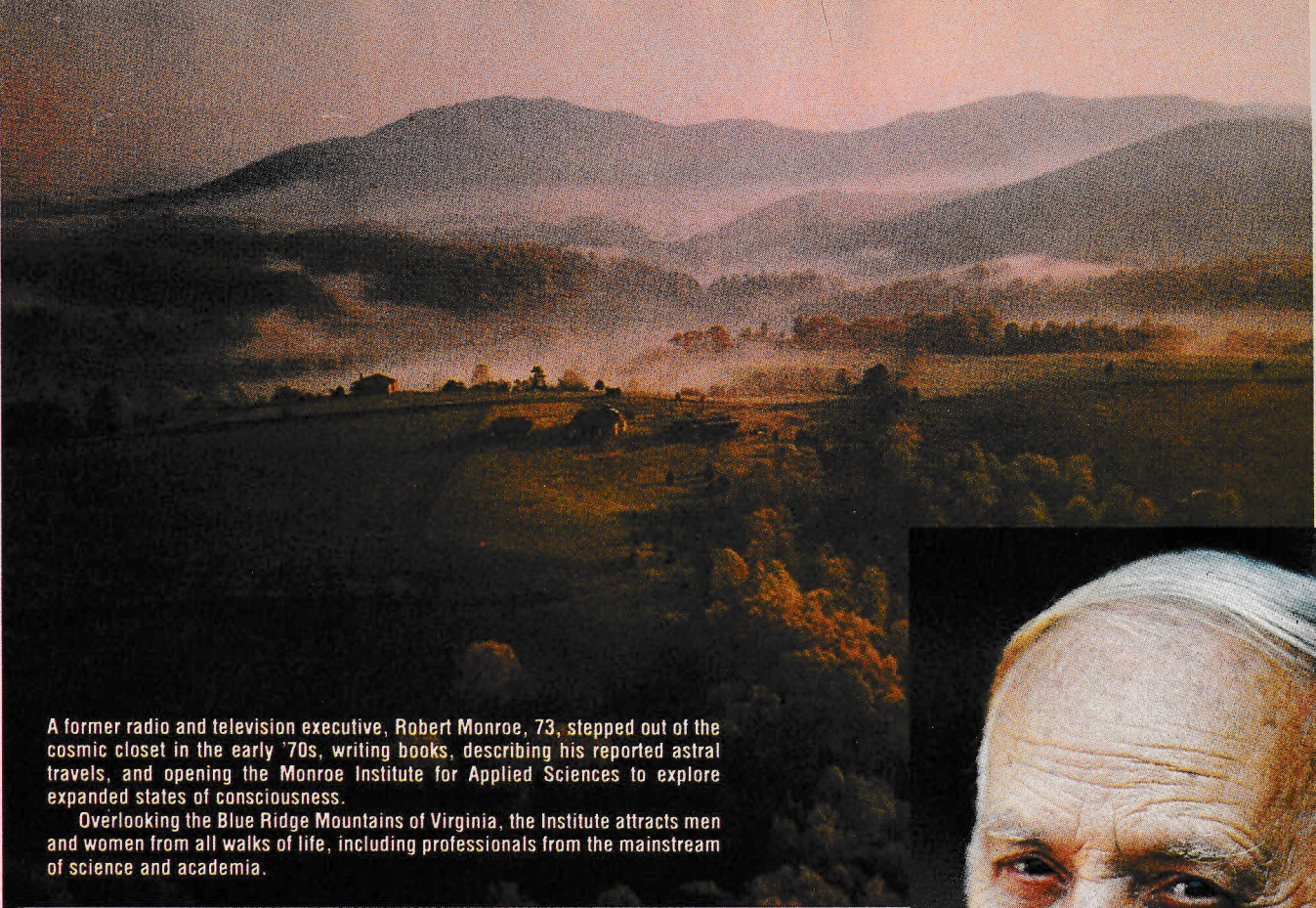
southern states with franchise operations.

It was on a Sunday afternoon in the spring of 1958, as Monroe was stretched out on the couch for an afternoon nap, when he remembers being suddenly gripped by terrifying, shock-like vibrations that pinned him to the couch. He fought to escape, "but it was like pushing against invisible bonds." When this recurred nine times over the next six weeks, Monroe concluded he had a brain tumor.

His physician dismissed that anxious assessment, diagnosing Monroe's malady as merely the result of too much work. He prescribed tranquilizers, less food, and more rest. Monroe was re-

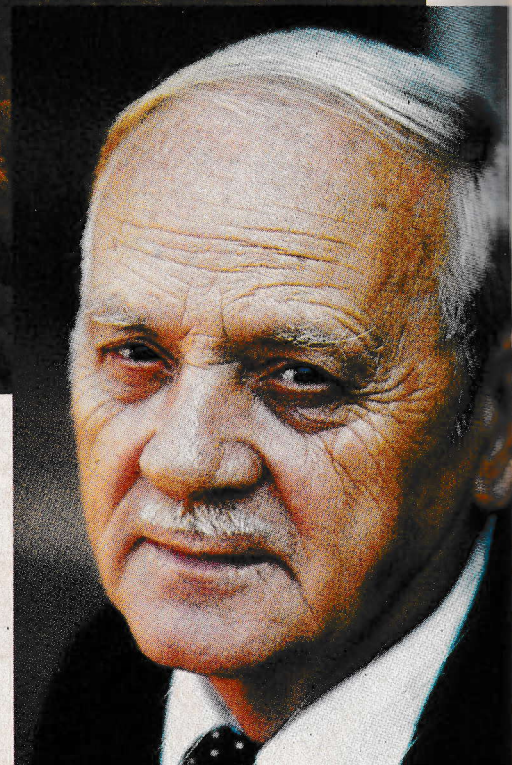
Jean-Noel Bassior, who lives in Santa Rosa, California, has written for Redbook, Filmfax, and other publications.

Jack Kauter



A former radio and television executive, Robert Monroe, 73, stepped out of the cosmic closet in the early '70s, writing books, describing his reported astral travels, and opening the Monroe Institute for Applied Sciences to explore expanded states of consciousness.

Overlooking the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, the Institute attracts men and women from all walks of life, including professionals from the mainstream of science and academia.



lieved by his doctor's lack of concern.

The vibrations continued for several months and became, Monroe says, "almost boring." But one night, as he lay in bed, he thought of flying his glider. Suddenly, he says, he collided with the bedroom ceiling. Monroe felt as though he were out of his physical body, floating above the bed. His wife appeared to be lying next to another man. Moving in for a closer look, he recalls, he saw that the man on the bed was himself. He was sure this was a fatal heart attack.

"And that did frighten me," Monroe says, "because it was everything I understood to be death."

But Monroe did not die. As he tells it, he dove back into his physical body, smoked a cigarette, and faced the possibility that he was mentally ill.

Monroe confided in his friend, psychologist Foster Bradshaw, who was versed in Eastern thought and who reassured him that Indian yogis reported leaving their bodies all the time. Monroe dismissed this as ridiculous. He was not a religious man, and had never delved into metaphysics. Bradshaw, however, suggested he open his mind and try to consciously repeat the out-of-body experience. Observe. See where it leads.

"I had two options," Monroe recalls. "One was sedation for the rest of my life; the other was to learn something about this [out-of-body] state so I could control it."

As a doggedly practical man and an

entrepreneur, Monroe felt that if he could master this phenomenon there might be some application for it down the road. So, while he continued to conduct his business as usual during the day, at night he played—finding he could lift, slide, or roll out of his body at will, and simply swim back to reenter. Monroe says his "second body" could penetrate solid objects—he could stick his hand right through the floor. But there seemed to be a "limiting factor" that kept him within thirty feet of his physical form asleep on the bed—until one night, when he says he broke free and sailed through the bedroom ceiling. This seemed like stepping out the front door and onto Pluto.

Monroe did not know then that he had perhaps stumbled into the twilight zone that lies between the worlds of matter and spirit, at the tangent of science and religion. He could not then foresee that exploring this realm would become his abiding passion for thirty years, or that he would establish an institute that would attract many professionals from the mainstream of science and academia.

And he had no idea that his singularly strange out-of-body experience was similar to experiences reported throughout history in virtually all cultures, from the ancient Egyptians and Greeks to the contemporary Britons. St. Paul mentioned the phenomenon in I Corinthians; Goethe, Aldous Huxley, D.H. Lawrence, and Jack London all reported having out-of-body

experiences. From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, a surge of Spiritualism in Europe and America had spawned thousands of out-of-body experience reports, many of them carefully chronicled by the prestigious British and American Societies for Psychical Research. This was the heyday of Theosophy, a time when such figures as Madame Blavatsky were popularizing the concept that humans exist on many planes besides the physical.

In metaphysical literature, there is considerable continuity among descriptions of this phenomenon, now commonly called "astral projection"—the experience of a "second body" that allegedly separates from the physical body during sleep, trauma, or at death. This "astral" or "subtle" body often is described as without weight or substance, and translucent or ghostly in appearance (when visible). Writers have claimed this body is capable of travelling in the "real" world

of space and time, but that its natural terrain is the so-called "astral plane."

This region, denied by modern science (which cannot detect or measure it), is affirmed in many religions. It is most extensively charted in Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* and the prolific writings of Alice Bailey. Both spell out a complex occult cosmology that, because it seems consistent with the mass of out-of-body experience testimony, helps make sense of these experiences, which as many as 20 percent of the modern public claim to have had in some form.

Whether out-of-body experiences are merely altered states of consciousness within the mind (like dreams or hallucinations), or whether some aspect of a person actually can leave the body, is an unresolved question, of course. Some people insist that if the out-of-body experience can withstand scientific scrutiny, this could constitute proof that the soul really survives death.

Robert Monroe chronicled his own out-of-body travels in his first book, *Journeys Out of the Body* (Anchor/Doubleday, 1971), which became something of a cult classic. It reads like a social scientist's view of the bizarre. In his heroic effort to bring objective scrutiny to a supremely subjective area, Monroe is systematic and meticulous in his approach.

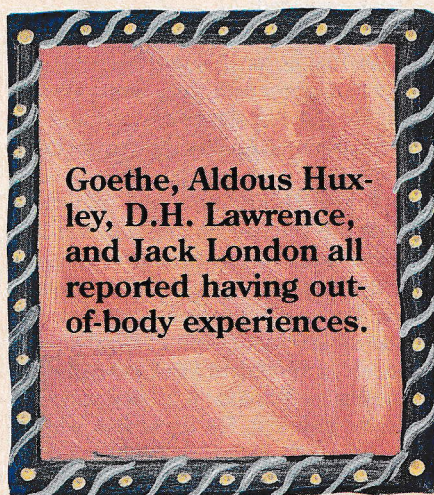
Monroe writes that interpenetrating familiar "here-and-now" reality (Locale I) is the infinitely vast Locale II (a place often described in metaphysical literature as the astral plane) which, as he tells it, has countless regions, including what we call Heaven and Hell. In Locale II, conventional laws of time, space, and motion do not apply. Artifacts, beings, and things, are visible and can be felt, but seem to lack substance. Mere thought is the apparent source of energy; travel is instantaneous. Think it, and it is so.

Locale II, Monroe believes, is where we often go during our sleep; where the newly dead are greeted and indoctrinated to the life hereafter; and where the psyches of the drugged and insane hang (and act) out, often lurching about like zombies, while their bodies remain here. In Locale II, raw emotions—especially fear and sexual desire—run rampant; people remain there until they learn how to control their emotions. Monroe himself admits being chagrined by his own uncontrolled emotionalism.

Monroe reports meeting helpful teachers and guides in Locale II and describes the "unbearable ecstasy" of atomic union, the astral version of sex. He says he sometimes has been accosted by angry people and plagued by goblins that rode on his back. It was in Locale II that he says he found paramilitary groups on

missions and encountered hostile cities where he had to take evasive action.

Locale II, Monroe feels, probably should have a vestibule with a notice that reads "Please Check All Physical Concepts Here." Monroe also describes a



Locale III, which he says is a sort of "anti-matter duplicate of our physical world." In this dimension, he says he entered the body of a man who seemed to be a parallel version of himself. Monroe notes that his intrusions seemed to cause his counterpart some embarrassment. He adds that to his knowledge no one else has ever reported a visit to Locale III.

As off-the-wall as these adventures may sound, Monroe claims that they were consistent and repeatable. He kept detailed notes, which indicate that he returned time after time to the same places and developed ongoing relationships with beings he met in these realms. Monroe reasons that our physical reality is only one band or frequency in a vast spectrum of realities in the "universal energy system." Like radio and light waves, these realities exist in different frequencies. As one radio station is not audible to listeners tuned to another, as ultraviolet light is not visible to viewers wearing infrared glasses, Monroe reasons, so Locale II is not detectable to beings in Locale I.

I READ *JOURNEYS* SEVERAL YEARS ago and was deeply moved. Monroe's account of his out-of-body adventures was stranger than fiction. But even more unbelievable was that this man, who was at the helm of a \$60 million corporation, had stepped out of the cosmic closet at great risk to his personal reputation. Over the years, I heard that Monroe was lecturing at the University of California at Los Angeles, Esalen Institute, the Smithsonian, but I couldn't track him down.

There were rumors his health was failing. Where was he? Had he gone crazy, gone to Tibet? Or simply decided one night not to return to his physical body—to chuck the corporate for the non-corporeal?

Finally, in 1985, his second book, *Far Journeys* (Doubleday), appeared. Monroe had startling news to report. He had neither blissed out nor dropped out, but had busied himself in a laboratory, tinkering with ways to use sound waves to create different mental states. Determined to find a technique to make out-of-body experiences accessible to anyone, Monroe had developed a patented process called Hemi-Sync, which he says uses sound to synchronize both hemispheres of the brain.

Some of Hemi-Sync's many proponents have claimed results ranging from out-of-body experiences to better in-body experiences, such as relief from insomnia, pain and drug abuse; rapid physical healing; accelerated learning; enhanced creativity; stress reduction; even improved tennis and golf. Hemi-Sync has been used at a U.S. Army language school and the military's Defense Information School, the University of Kansas and Brown University medical schools, and many public school systems.

The Monroe Institute for Applied Sciences opened in 1971, to explore expanded states of human consciousness. The Institute's chief public offering remains the week-long "Gateway Voyage," which Monroe says is aimed at enabling participants to "experience profound areas of awareness [and] to achieve and willfully control the out-of-body state." Hemi-Sync is its principal exploratory tool.

What I learned about the Gateway Voyage surprised me. Among its graduates are numerous physicians, educators, engineers, and scientists, including British biologist Rupert Sheldrake, developmental psychologist Joseph Chilton Pearce, *On Death and Dying* author Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D., and Whitney Strieber, author of the bestsellers *Communion* and *Transformation*. To date, more than six thousand have taken the Gateway Voyage. According to an Institute spokesperson, an estimated 85 percent are professionals, 30 percent of whom attend to learn how Hemi-Sync can be applied in their fields, and 41 percent are male—double the norm for most self-awareness workshops. The average age is 39.

The Institute answers 10,000 inquiries per year and estimates that 200,000 people have experienced Hemi-Sync through audio tapes. This tremendous surge of interest suggests that Monroe's area of investigation is a field whose

time has come. He might have been considered insane only years ago, but today, although his work remains highly controversial, he has been joined by many other scientists in exploring the frontiers of the brain under the rubrics of psychobiology, biophysics, psychology, and behavioral medicine. At the crux of his investigations is that perennial question of the true relationship between the body and the soul (psyche).

If Monroe was not the first to chronicle out-of-body experiences, he surely was one of the most determined and best-equipped to explore and apply them. As a communicator whose radio shows had reached millions, he quite naturally sought a way to document his experiences and to report them to others. As an engineer who had worked with sound for twenty years, he intuitively suspected that sounds could trigger specific brain waves.

Scientists already knew that specific brain waves signalled different mental states—the relaxation of alpha, the excitement of beta, the deep sleep of delta. Monroe reasoned that if he could find a sound that produced the brain wave associated with out-of-body experiences, then anyone could be induced to have the experience. He set up a lab, where he worked fervidly nights and weekends.

In late 1961, Monroe moved his family to Richmond, Virginia, where he began to acquire cable TV stations, according to plan. In 1962 he set up a research and development branch of his company, through which he could pursue his nocturnal experiments. Soon he attracted volunteers eager to aid his research—many of them psychologists, physicists, and engineers.

Monroe hooked up his subjects to electrodes and monitored brain waves and vital signs as he fed different tones into their ears. His breakthrough came when he fed separate sound patterns into each ear through stereo headphones, and found both halves of the brain acted in unison to “hear” a third signal—the difference between the two. For example: If one ear hears 100 HZ and the other hears 125 HZ, the brain will subtract the two, producing an electrical signal of 25 HZ and resonating to that signal. Monroe, it seemed, had discovered a way to synchronize both halves of the brain, producing a sort of light-bulb-to-laser step-up in brain power. He also claims to have found a way to generate specific brain waves that could induce predictable mental states.

The implications of this were enormous. He seemingly could affect a subject's mental state by selecting the sounds he fed into the subject's ears,

producing sleep, alertness, or—Monroe reasoned—why not sleep *and* alertness? If he could find sounds that would trigger the “mind-awake, body-asleep” state of an out-of-body experience, he might have “a window” through which people could glimpse the realities he claimed to have explored.

Finally, Monroe hit on a combination of tones that he says caused his subjects' EEGs to register *both* sleep and wakefulness. He put the signal on tape and labeled it *Focus 10*. When a psychiatrist friend tested it on several subjects, and one of them reported himself “bouncing against the ceiling, looking down at his physical body,” Monroe was reassured that his discovery could indeed work. While he hadn't devised a system for transporting someone to the “astral world” of Locale II, he had, at least, developed a sound that might separate a “second body” from the physical. He knew that where someone went, once free, might not necessarily parallel his own experience.

By the mid-'70s, word of Monroe's work had spread to the West Coast, and the Esalen Institute—the Big Sur, California, mecca for explorers of consciousness—invited him to conduct a week-end workshop. This became the prototype for the Gateway program, which uses Hemi-Sync sounds to guide people from “C-1 Consciousness” (the normal waking state) into ever-expanding levels of awareness where a number of people have reported glimpsing other realities.

Shortly thereafter, the Monroe Institute was formed to administer the Gateway program and to oversee the experimental journeys of a core group of six regular volunteers Monroe called the “Explorer Team.” Monroe says many in this group replicated his earliest out-of-body experiences. The Explorers tested new frequencies that reportedly pushed them into farther reaches of consciousness. Much of the data they brought back from their journeys, Monroe says, has been incorporated into the six-day “Gateway Voyage.”

By 1985, when the Institute finally became self-supporting—and nonprofit—Monroe and others had poured almost \$1.5 million of their personal funds into the project.

As I absorbed Monroe's second book, I framed question after question:

Do we go to sleep at night, or do we go Somewhere Else, leading a double life we rationalize when we wake as “just a dream”? Is physical reality the only one to be believed—or are we really multidimensional beings existing simultaneously in many realities? And, in a universe of quarks, black holes, and morphogenetic fields, is there, perhaps, an

anti-matter world where we can merge with parallel or possible selves? Are we possibly immortal beings, trying so desperately to extend our lifetime warranties that we've missed the fine print that reads “Forever”?

Perhaps the Gateway Voyage itself would provide some answers.

I ARRIVED AT THE MONROE INSTITUTE in central Virginia on a crisp, bright January day. Its three lodge-style buildings—a lab, a living center, and a lecture hall—seemed perched on the edge of the earth, overlooking eight hundred acres of broad meadows, snowy woods, and the smoke-blue slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Twenty-two people arrived with me to take the week-long Gateway Voyage. Because the program consisted of listening to tapes and sharing reactions, we would be spending nearly all our time, except for a long afternoon break, in “The Center,” a pleasant, wood-paneled building where we would work and sleep in sound-equipped cubicles, eat and socialize in the dining hall, and discuss the tapes in the conference room. The Center was homelike, functional. Its muted decor mirrored the copper soil, brown leaves, and gray woods of the winter landscape.

Our group included two physicians, a lawyer, a financial planner, a language professor, a Hollywood script supervisor, an army sergeant, a Polaroid senior manager, a retired oil company executive, and a horse trainer who had multiple sclerosis. Getting acquainted, we soon established deep mutual respect for our commitments to the search that had brought us together.

After dinner we gathered in the lecture room for Monroe's first talk. Some people were clearly nervous at the prospect of seeing Monroe in person. His books were jam-packed with so many astral adventures, close calls, and bizarre encounters with beings who resembled the *Star Wars* bar crowd that it was hard to imagine that the man still functioned in a physical body. Tension mounted as a storm blew across the valley, pounding the windows.

Robert Monroe came in out of the rain and paused at the back of the room. He looked bemused. Dressed like a weekend sportsman in a sailor's cap, plaid shirt, baggy pants, and beat-up loafers, he could have been a retired executive searching for a cocktail lounge in a resort hotel—only to stumble into some damn holistic seminar by mistake. Despite his rugged clothes and bushy eyebrows, the 73-year-old Monroe seemed

frail, almost translucent. He broke the respectful silence with the odd announcement, "I'm still alive."

Monroe went on to explain that he never had thought he would survive thirty years of being in and out of the body thousands of times. His personal goal now, and the aim of the Gateway program, he said, was to help us see "the cracks in the box"—the new possibilities that open when we journey to other reality systems and get some perspective on this one.

Monroe explained we would be using taped "Hemi-Sync" sounds to achieve Focus 10, a state in which the body falls asleep but the mind remains alert and awake. From 10 we would move to Focus 12, a state of expanded awareness; then on to Focus 15, where time does not exist. Next we would explore Focus 21, a state of consciousness on the borderline between physical and non-physical reality, at which point it could be "ridiculously simple to step out of the body." The Hemi-Sync tapes, Monroe added, are only "training wheels." By the end of the week, he said, we'd be achieving these states of awareness by merely thinking about them.

Monroe smiled often. Everything he said seemed laced with secret humor. As he previewed the Gateway Voyage, I felt in him a kind of fatherly concern for our well-being as we set out on the road to other "reality-energy systems" that he had mapped with his Explorer team.

Our reality, he continued, is an "exquisite learning system that teaches survival." But once we learn that we're more than our physical bodies, he said, we can release our survival fears and experience a freedom we've never known.

"Kids," he admonished us, "you've got to learn non-verbal communication (referring to the wide use of telepathy noted in his books) because all the intelligent species I've seen out there use it."

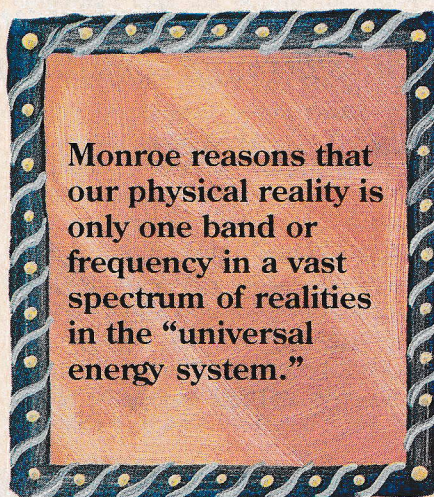
He paused, then added softly: "One thing I want you to know: that you, as a consciousness, survive physical death. Whether you like it or not, you're going to do it. And it doesn't make any difference what your performance is in this life. You can be Adolf Hitler or Pope Pius XXVI. It won't change the fact that you do survive."

The Gateway program, he assured us, would provide the tools to "know this through direct experience."

As I watched the man, his energy seemed to fluctuate like a lamp on a dimmer switch controlled by an unseen hand. One moment his gestures were feeble, his voice almost inaudible; the next his movements were forceful, his voice strong. It was otherworldly, as if

his energy were divided between this reality and somewhere else. I wondered if I was imagining this.

Later, I mentioned my perception to a man who had known Monroe for eighty years. "It's an interesting phenomenon," he agreed. "It's an ebb and flow, as



Monroe reasons that our physical reality is only one band or frequency in a vast spectrum of realities in the "universal energy system."

if there's a force there, renewing his energy at certain times. It's puzzling."

It was also mesmerizing. By the end of Monroe's talk, the room was charged with anticipation. He walked out with a strength that had not been apparent when he had entered.

That night, we settled right down to work. When we had arrived, we'd been asked to surrender our watches, a tactic that quickly loosened our grips on reality. Here we were not only cut off from regular time, we were isolated in space (the Institute borders ten square miles of forest) and deprived of media and other stimuli, which forced us to focus inward. I soon lost track of the day as well as the hour.

Our CHEC units (an acronym for Controlled Holistic Environmental Chamber), where we worked and slept, were small, curtained cubicles the size of a single bed. Each unit was equipped with a tape deck and stereo headphones. Colored lights allowed us to create special effects ranging from pleasant to eerie. Fresh air was pumped in at intervals, and the unit was shielded from electro-magnetic radiation to promote better sleep. The ceiling was high—convenient if one were to slip out of the body a lot. There was a "Help" button dangling at the end of a long cord, there in case one of us needed aid or comfort on the journey back to normal consciousness.

As we lay in our darkened CHEC units, Monroe's soothing taped voice drifted in through headphones, riding waves of Hemi-Sync surf. Each tape in the Gateway series takes you through the same preparatory steps: First you

dump your thoughts and worries into an "Energy Conversion Box;" next you do "Resonant Tuning," a combination of chanting and rhythmic breathing; finally you recite the Gateway Affirmation, stating that you are more than your physical body, that you deeply desire to experience other energy systems, and that you desire the assistance of beings "whose wisdom is equal to or greater than my own."

Monroe told us that before the Affirmation was used by his Explorer Team, the members thought they were probing a "sterile universe." But once they asked for help, he said, they discovered a cosmos teeming with inhabitants eager to communicate.

Monroe's taped voice now guided us toward Focus 10, the first guidepost along the journey to the place "where your mind is bright and awake, and your body is calmly, deeply asleep." We would get there, he said, through the "10-Point System of Total Relaxation." Oh. So this was nothing more than the standard routine on every visualization tape I had ever heard. I knew all about this: You fell asleep out of boredom, somewhere between the abdomen and the solar plexus.

Monroe began counting toward ten as the Hemi-Sync sounds pulsed gently in the background. He said to let relaxation flow easily and deeply into the brain. "Five. Your brain tells each leg to relax. Seven. Relax; let go; sleep. Nine. Sleep. Ten. Ten."

I felt refreshed, mind sharp and alert, but someone was snoring loudly in the CHEC unit. I wished they'd either wake up or shut up. Besides, these units weren't built for two people.

Suddenly I realized the person snoring heavily was me. The awakened "I" was trapped in a sleeping body. The sense of confinement was strangely exhilarating, for I knew if I could overcome the fear barrier, I could leave. Then the first tape ended.

After listening to each tape, we would gather in the conference room to share experiences. We had been instructed to scan the group each time to make sure our roommate was present (there were two CHEC units per room), because reactions to the tape could be unexpected and powerful. If someone was missing, a trainer would go to talk the person back to waking reality, or "C-1 Consciousness."

The Institute has a rotating staff of thirteen trainers. Most are psychologists, psychiatrists, or professional seminar leaders. Two were assigned to our group. Many Gateway alumni agree that one of the highlights of the program is the non-

(continued on page 84)

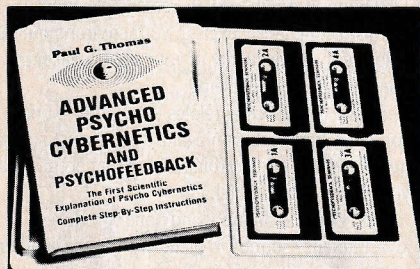
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ASTRAL TRAVEL

(continued from page 49)

judgmental attitude of the trainers dur-
ing the post-tape sessions. "One of the
things they constantly affirmed was to
trust your own experience," says author
and former TV evangelist Terry Cole-
Whittaker, who went through Gateway
in 1985. "They never said, 'You're wrong,'
or, 'I'm sorry, but you didn't have Bob
Monroe's experience.' Their attitude was
'We believe you.'"

"Bob is insistent that the trainers don't
give out a lot of answers," says Gateway
registrar Helen Warring. "We say, 'Get
back to the tape and get your own an-
swer.' Some people rebel when they hear
that. Most places you go, they have all
the answers."

Over the week, the tapes intensified.
Once we had learned to park our sleep-
ing bodies in Focus 10, we moved on to
Focus 12 and "First-Stage Separation," a
tape that is supposed to guide you through
five techniques for leaving the body: roll-
ing or vaulting out, flowing out through
the head, backing out, or simply floating
upwards. My physical body slept through
the tape, as usual; but the "I" that was
awake and alert appreciated these astral
aerobics and began to rock happily back
and forth. It felt as if an inner or second
body was working loose from my physi-
cal one.

During the post-tape session, others
reported these same first intimations of
a "second body." A few people claimed
they actually had left their bodies and
roamed the Institute, visiting other CHEC
units or, in some cases, having mutual
encounters in the skylit hallways. The
trainers took it all in stride. They were
supportive, but never offered any expla-
nations. No matter how startling the re-
port, the ultimate response was, "Thank
you for sharing."

We pressed on to Focus 15, a time-
less state where past and future seemed
to merge with here and now; then to
Focus 21, what Monroe calls the "gate-
way to other energy systems." In the
post-tape sessions, reports ranged from
encounters with dead friends and rela-
tives to industrial-strength mystical ex-
periences.

A marketing analyst from Tucson
claimed she had met her dead brother
in Focus 21 and had received the final
hug she had longed for since he had
died in a plane crash. The horse trainer
with MS reported her first pain-free hour
in months. The Polaroid executive said
he left his body and met the "Ultimate
Energy." He had lain in his CHEC unit
for half an hour, he said, "just sobbing
and crying."

Many took Monroe's advice and ex-

perimented with non-verbal communi-
cation. Two people said they had passed
telepathic messages across the hall,
reporting success "a number of times."

A few people had terrifying or un-
pleasant experiences. One woman felt
as if she had been electrocuted and had
wandered outside the Center, disoriented.
One night, after hearing a Focus 10 tape
designed to uncover emotions concealed
by fears, painful memories surfaced for
many. Suddenly we were no longer stran-
gers. Nearly everyone was crying over
their own pain or someone else's. This
closeness was unexpected; it was not
supposed to be that kind of workshop.

While many people (including my-
self) did not claim to have an out-of-
body experience, it became apparent to
most of us that it didn't matter. The
states of consciousness we explored
seemed genuine.

"It was just a sound in a dark room,
just listening to a tape," summed up
physician David Cannon months later.
"But the whole gamut of existence was
available to you. It was as real as going to
high school."

When I contacted other Gateway
grads, a few people reported the onset
of out-of-body experiences during the
first year after the program. Many said
they still worked with Hemi-Sync tapes,
and some reported that the effects from
the Gateway Voyage had lasted up to
three years.

Since his experience, "my whole ap-
proach to patient care is more whole-
brained," said Cannon. "I don't see any
difference now between a bad marriage
and cancer."

Book editor Barbara Bowen said she
used Hemi-Sync to aid in straightening
her teeth. By listening to the tapes at
night and visualizing her mouth chang-
ing, she feels she trimmed six months
off a projected twenty-four-month dental
 ordeal.

Many other grads reported contact
with the dead or forays into cosmic con-
sciousness. "Gateway opens up whatever
you need to look at," said Eleanor Friede,
who edited the Richard Bach classic *Jon-
athan Livingston Seagull*. Friede's issue
was her dead father, whose clumsy,
though sincere, attempts at affection had
traumatized her as a child. Friede said
she met her father during the Gateway
Voyage and finally came to know that
"his intentions had been good and pure.
It really changed my outlook on life,"
she added. "I felt safe and loved."

Physicist Adam Trombly had a "pro-
foundly healing experience," he recalled.
"In Focus 21, I dissolved like a fizzy—
simply dropped my body and immersed
myself in love. I had no illusion of being

If he could find sounds that would trigger the "mind-awake, body-asleep" state of an out-of-body experience, he might have "a window" through which people could glimpse the realities he claimed to have explored.

me."

Many grads reported seeing auras of light during the program. Meredith Lady Young, whose visit to the Institute sparked the book *Agartha* (Stillpoint, 1984), believes she touched "an unseen level of life, a growing, alive energy of the planet." She feels that our society has done "a real job of getting away from that vibration."

Adam Trombly agreed. "We've become dissociated from that unseen or 'astral' dimension," he said. "We walk around in a state of hemispheric a-synchronization, a form of stress and shock. We're static, not ecstatic beings." As one remedy, Trombly envisions a chain of "Earth Healing Centers" that would make

CHEC units and Hemi-Sync tapes available to the public.

A few people told me they no longer needed the tapes to achieve Focus 10 or 12, but could now "click" into these states just by thinking about them, as Monroe had promised.

I find that whenever I listen to a Hemi-Sync tape I become aware of a timeless dimension that permeates here-and-now reality—but which I usually push away.

BEFORE LEAVING VIRGINIA, I visited Monroe in his office, just up the road from the Institute, at the top of the ridge. Settling into a battered executive-type chair with the stuff

ing hanging out, Monroe fished a king-size Carlton out of the hopeless clutter on his desk. Piles of old coats and floppy disks were spilled onto worn furniture. A bank of synthesizers for creating Hemi-Sync tapes was stacked against one wall; aerial photos of the Institute lined another.

"I don't purport to have the truth," said Monroe, leaning back and lighting up. "But at least I say, 'You go find out.'"

"If I have any theme in what I am," he added softly, "it's to tell it like it is, pull away the glitz, the glamour and the scam."

On this day, his energy was strong—a big man with a board room presence. His blue eyes were focused on a distance somewhere between inner and outer space.

He told me his own experiences in the out-of-body state have ranged from brutal to sublime. "You want the terror spots?" he asked gently. He once panicked, he recalled, when an implacable barrier, like a steel wall, barred him from reentering his physical body. Another time he got back into the body OK, only it was someone else's body and it happened to be dead. Over the years, he said, he has experienced cosmic winds

(continued on page 96)

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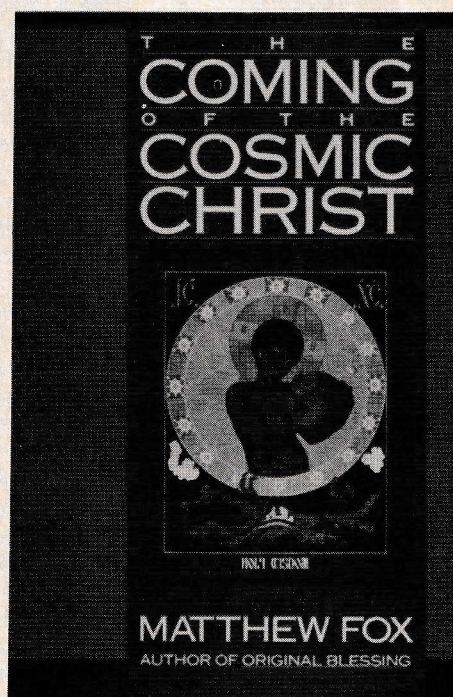
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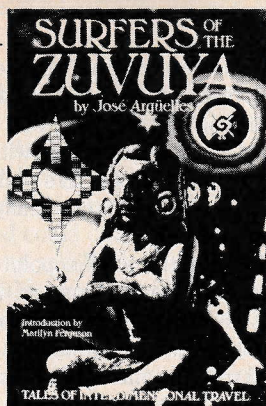
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ASTRAL TRAVEL

(continued from page 85)

that tossed him like a leaf to "the other end of nowhere," and astral bullies who beat him savagely and mocked him when he screamed and prayed for divine assistance.

Did any other-worldly beings answer his pleas for help? "Mental anguish and screaming have sometimes brought one of them," he said. But more often, he has relied upon his wits and his "beautiful left brain" to escape danger.

This practical approach to an experience many consider "mystical" is one of the strange paradoxes surrounding Monroe. It frustrates some observers and a few close friends, who feel that after logging thousands of hours "out-of-body" he should regularly experience the boundless love of a Divine Force deeply concerned about its creation.

On this point, Monroe reserves judg-

Monroe, it seemed, had discovered a way to synchronize both halves of the brain, producing a sort of light-bulb-to-laser step-up in brain power.

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ment. After thirty years of cosmic sight-seeing, he is not at all sure that whatever "Force" put this system together is still "minding the planet." In fact, he insisted, "this Earth ambience" and other reality systems he has observed in the out-of-body state are governed by impersonal laws that respond well to left-brain logic.

"Humans have a tendency to personalize things," he said patiently. We give labels such as "Divine" or "Evil" to impersonal forces, that may not have those qualities at all. But he feels that if we can get beyond these judgments and take an "impersonal baseline" with us into other realities, many fears evaporate and we can explore these realms with "exquisite freedom."

Besides, Monroe added with excitement, superimposed on this impersonal, "doesn't-care" system is a caring system. "That's the point," he said, leaning forward intently. "That caring system

exists in spite of this 'don't-care' system. Do you understand?"

He admits there have been times when he has touched a reality so sublime that he did not want to return to his physical body. I asked him what it felt like. "I can't help but become emotional about that," he said after a long pause. "I suppose it was like the echo of a great, great love."

In 1972, Monroe said, he entered "an entirely new era of out-of-body activity," which he compared to "leaving local traffic for the Interstate." This has continued to the present. While saying his experiences are centered in Locale II (a realm he feels "goes on to eternity"), Monroe believes that 90 percent of his recent adventures have taken place "beyond the time-space medium," making them hard to translate into physical reality.

The saga of Robert Monroe's out-of-body journeys and its exciting sequel—his attempt to build a bridge from physical reality into non-physical realms—reads like a plot for one of the old-time radio dramas Monroe himself produced in the '40s. But as the inner sanctum door creaks shut and the music fades, the questions remain: Can we really leave our bodies? How can we prove it? Do we need a new science to explore experiences that take place beyond the range of our three-dimensional data-gathering tools? And if we are, indeed, multidimensional beings, what would life be like if we were to tap our full potential?

Skeptics contend that neither Monroe nor anyone else has ever left home without their physical body. "These people are traveling in mental, not physical, space," Ronald Siegel, a psycho-pharmacologist at the UCLA School of Medicine, told *Omni* in 1984. While Siegel concedes that Hemi-Sync sounds might induce a feeling of dissociation, he maintains that "it's taking place inside the brain, just like any other hallucination."

That sentiment is shared by philosophy professor Paul Kurtz, who chairs the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSI-COPS) and publishes its noted journal, *The Skeptical Inquirer*. Feelings of floating and detachment from the body can be produced by drugs, he points out, so why not by sound?

Though some critics concede that Monroe's objectivity and high-tech syntax have made it possible to consider out-of-body experiences scientifically, they point to the lack of double-blind studies to prove that Hemi-Sync does anything at all.

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gram at the Menninger Clinic, people can attain states of consciousness that resemble hemispheric synchronization without listening to Hemi-Sync sounds. Green is not convinced that Hemi-Sync has any effect on the brain when removed from the idyllic setting of the Gateway program. "Where's the data?" he wonders.

Robert Monroe is content to leave the controversy and the burden of proof to others. "I began to sense," he writes in *Far Journeys*, "that the theme of 'proof' was not part of my mode of operation." Instead, his simple motto is, "If it works, use it"—a precept that holds true in any reality system.

Monroe concedes that "we walk a narrow line between orthodoxy and the unconventional," but notes that the Institute draws more inquiries from physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and educators than from researchers working outside of conventional science.

Perhaps one reason the Institute attracts so much mainstream interest is the lack of funding for researching the paranormal. "Out-of-body experiences are a complex phenomenon that we're not well-equipped to research yet," says University of California-Davis psychologist Charles Tart, who wrote the foreword to *Journeys Out of the Body*. "You're talking about a couple of dozen full-time people in the entire United States. We're making slow progress."

However, Barry Beyerstein, a neuroscientist at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, who has researched the link between brain disorders and spiritual "possession," sees little reason to pursue such study. He says empirical evidence indicates that out-of-body experiences are generated by neurological disorders such as epilepsy, migraines, and a state called "dissociation," in which one part of the brain assumes control over other parts.

Why, then, postulate any other cause? According to Beyerstein, science dictates that you don't hypothesize things you can't see and measure, unless you're up against a brick wall.

"But the very *existence* of consciousness is a brick wall for science," counters British plant biologist Rupert Sheldrake, a Gateway grad whose theory of morphic resonance challenges many scientific principles (See Books, Page 61). "Science can't explain consciousness and it can't explain much about brain function either."

"One hundred years of parapsychology haven't convinced the skeptics, but if you start with a world view of 'There are no other dimensions,' then you're going to say that these experiences are

just projections of the brain."

Most things that are important to us, Sheldrake feels, can't yet be proved in a lab; people change their world view, he says, "usually as a result of their personal experience."

Despite his questioning of Hemi-Sync's demonstrated validity, Elmer Green admits that "if we ever end up with a science in the area of out-of-body experiences, Monroe will go down as one of the forerunners. He's like a Columbus. He classified things."

Psychologist Ray Waldkoetter, who once incorporated Hemi-Sync tapes into a training program at the U.S. Defense Information School, is another who is enthusiastic about Monroe's discoveries. "It may be a couple of hundred years before we grasp what he's given us," says the Army research analyst.

MY OWN INVESTIGATION has left me with questions—rather than answers—and much food for thought. I keep recalling my last day at the Institute, when Monroe, his wife Nancy, and I were sitting in the living room of their spacious hilltop home, discussing the concept of God. As early as 1974, said Monroe, his Explorer Team had allowed intelligent beings to speak through their bodies, long before "channeling" became a household word. But there was never any reference to "God." "We asked, we probed," Monroe said, flashing one of his gentle smiles, "but 'They' were politely evasive, as if to say, 'You'll grow out of that concept eventually.'"

But what about that time, Nancy interjected, when that Explorer met that awe-inspiring Energy so much greater than himself?

That wasn't "God," answered Monroe, that was simply an Energy the Explorer couldn't handle. One needs to be objective, he added, giving an example: If you meet a shining, golden figure, don't sink to your knees, but "stick out your hand and say 'Hi I'm Bill.' And it will say, 'Oh, you've awakened. Good!'"

"Well, I don't want to tell a tale on you now," Nancy said innocently, "but I've seen you get very emotional. You were touched somehow, some way. I'm not saying it was 'God.' But it was something that communicated itself to you in such magnitude that your systems almost blew..."

Monroe, looking like an impatient executive late for a top-level meeting, stood up abruptly. "Shall we go to lunch?"

Driving down the winding road to Nellysford, Monroe reflected on the

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strange events of thirty years ago that shattered his conventional life.

Why had these things happened to him? Did he think he was some "chosen one"?

"No," he replied unassumingly. He thinks of himself as "an accident, like the monkey who happened to be out on a branch that was too thin—and it broke."

In an out-of-body journey to some time beyond the year 3000, Monroe told me, he once glimpsed human beings (or "beings being human") living close to their full potential. They reportedly informed him that the out-of-body experience was obsolete. Monroe said these beings all had many bodies they wore like clothing, leaving their favorites to sleep under trees like we'd hang clothes in a closet. Soil was converted to food in seconds. And humans finally had adopted non-verbal communication.

As he had with Gateway, Monroe began translating this vision into "a hard-core, take-care-of-things," program called H[uman]-PLUS that now is offered at the Institute as a six-day intensive experience.

This training system, he claims, will teach humans total conscious control over all physical, mental, and emotional functions—enabling us to do such things as control pain in thirty seconds, compress an entire night's sleep into 5-10 minutes, and access "cellular consciousness." In his forthcoming book, *Ultimate Journey*, Monroe plans to outline how this H-PLUS system "can help you know who you really are by showing you how to convert belief systems into know-systems."

Monroe would say little more about H-PLUS—except that he believes that the program could, in time, lead to a new species of human being and result in "a quantum leap in the evolution of the Earth-Life system."

And perhaps when he "drops this consciousness" at death, Monroe told me, he'll gain a deeper understanding of his role on earth and discern some cosmic plan. But for now, he concluded, turning off the local road and guiding his black Subaru wagon toward the Interstate, he considers the revelation of H-PLUS as his primary contribution. "That," he added quietly, "is my contract. I'm not the major force by any means. I'm just putting in my two cents, in the twentieth century."

For more information on the Monroe Institute or the Hemi-Sync tapes, write Rt. 1, Box 175, Faber VA 22938 or telephone (804) 361-1252.